



Department of Justice

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RECORD BREAKING SEIZURES OF MARIJUANA PLANTS THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA FOR 2008

Collaborative Efforts with Partner Agencies Yields 5,249,881 Plants Seized

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—California Department of Justice, Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE) and other participants in the Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP) including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Field Division Offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, in conjunction with the United States Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of California, announce record breaking seizures of marijuana from California public and private lands during CAMP season and Operation Green Acres 2, resulting in a record breaking combined total of 5,249,881. Of that number, 3,641,328 or almost 70 Percent were eradicated from state and federal public land.

CAMP reported a second year of record breaking numbers of marijuana plants eradicated during the 2008 season at 2.9 million. Of the 2.9 million plants, two million were seized from public lands while the remainder was seized from private lands. Marijuana eradication season begins in July and continues through October.

The continued discovery of record numbers of plants is the result of an organized, collaborative effort by the CAMP program and its partner agencies. CAMP has been operating for 26 years as a multi-agency task force comprised of local, state, and federal agencies including, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Parks Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Office of National Drug Control Policy–National Marijuana Initiative, California National Guard, and Office of Emergency Services. The program is designed to help counties eradicate illegal marijuana cultivation and trafficking in California.

BNE Chief John Gaines stated, "California is Ground-Zero for domestically produced marijuana in the United States; more than half of the domestically produced marijuana in the United States is grown in California. The California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement vows to continue our exceptional partnership with our local, state and federal counterparts to eradicate illegally grown marijuana and prosecute those individuals and organizations responsible for trafficking this drug while damaging our environment and endangering the lives of our citizens."

The counties with the highest numbers of eradicated plants for 2008 are: Lake (499,508), Tulare (395,489), Shasta (394,375), Mendocino (231,802), and Humboldt (145,762). All counties listed, except for Humboldt, had an increase in the number of marijuana plants eradicated.

Last year, 53 individuals were arrested and 41 weapons were seized. During the 2008 season, 143 individuals were arrested and 142 weapons seized.

“Our forests and public lands cannot and will not be allowed to become safe havens for Mexican drug cartels operating massive marijuana cultivations. These criminal enterprises pose great risk to those simply seeking to enjoy these lands in the manner for which they were intended,” U.S. Attorney McGregor Scott said.

In addition to the 2008 CAMP season, DEA conducted their second year of Operation Green Acres, a four-week, statewide operation that began in late July and was concluded in August 2008. The operation was conducted by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, and primarily focused on marijuana grown outdoors.

As a result of Operation Green Acres 2, agents seized almost 1.4 million marijuana plants, with an estimated street value of \$4.2 billion. Approximately 1.2 million of those plants were eradicated from public lands in California, a 73 percent increase from last year. Additionally, 63 individuals were arrested statewide in connection with the operation. Of those arrests, seven were charged in federal court in the Eastern District of California, while four were charged in federal court in the Central District of California. Nearly \$200,000 in assets and 102 weapons were seized during the operation.

“Each year more marijuana is seized from California’s public lands. It destroys our national forests and threatens the safety of the residents and visitors who seek to enjoy California’s natural treasures. Only with collaborative law enforcement efforts, will we be able to make an impact against this serious problem,” stated DEA Special Agent in Charge Javier F. Peña.

Another important eradication effort, also undertaken last summer, was operation LOCUST, targeting large-scale marijuana cultivation in and around Sequoia National Park. This operation was spearheaded by Tulare County Sheriff Bill Wittman, BNE, along with DEA, U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. It resulted in the seizure of approximately 524,000 plants and indictments of 15 individuals in the Fresno Court of the Eastern District of California.

The CAMP program and its partner agencies continue to eradicate the large scale marijuana cultivations from public and private lands that cause deforestation, damage to wildlife habitats, and hazardous-chemical pollution. Pesticides, chemical repellants, poisons, and fuels are often used in large-scale, outdoor marijuana cultivation. Attempts to irrigate the marijuana crops often harm nearby ecology including creeks, streams, and rivers. These plants are often under surveillance by their caretakers, who, in many instances, are heavily armed with pre-planned escape routes.

“Illegal marijuana cultivation is wreaking havoc on our public lands and causing extensive environmental damage of these precious resources,” said DEA Los Angeles Special Agent in Charge Timothy J. Landrum. “DEA is committed to working jointly with our federal, state, and local partners in combating this growing threat to our parks and our communities.”

The continued success of the CAMP program is due in large part to the coordinated effort between local, state, and federal agencies.

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